HIRF news

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FOR PARTNERS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

HIRF update

Taking action to reduce high-intensity residential fires

THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA is taking decisive action to reduce the effects of high-intensity residential fires. The final report of the High-Intensity Residential Fires Working Group was presented to the Government of Alberta Cabinet this spring, and 18 of the 22 recommendations in the report were accepted.

Minister Ray Danyluk speaking about the HIRF recommendations.

The working group was established to review the facts surrounding high-intensity residential fires and make recommendations to reduce their occurrence and severity.

New group is growing

By expanding an already existing working group, led by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) Managing Director Dave Hodgins, the group grew to include members of the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs (AMA) and external stakeholders such as representatives from municipal emergency services (including the Edmonton and Calgary fire departments), the Safety Codes Council and municipal safety codes officers. The working group was established

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Alberta

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Managing Director's message

Autumn is almost here again

Dave Hodgins

As we approach our fall season here in Alberta, I look back on the many successes that we, as partners in Alberta's system for managing emergencies, have achieved. I thank all of you for those achievements.

We cannot sit back, however, as there is still much to do. I am reminded that the sustainability of Alberta's fire service is one of the highest priorities for both the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) and the Government of Alberta. We have heard your concerns and we are taking action together to address this issue. Alberta is fortunate to have the dedicated volunteers that staff the fire service and many other organizations that operate within the emergency management system and we are committed to doing all that we can to allow this model to thrive into the future.

The agency is focused on working with its partners to find solutions to these sustainability concerns through short-term and long-term projects currently underway. These include developing a cohesive program aimed at improving the ability of municipalities to attract and retain staff. As you read this, the AFCA and the agency will be well down the road to completing this material. The material will serve both volunteer and career fire service organizations.

Over the summer, we have worked with and supported the AFCA to gather specific information regarding challenges and successes within fire departments across Alberta. You can expect this material to be available to you very soon.

As you are likely aware, we are also well into our training review project. Looking at the way fire service training is delivered will also have a tremendous impact on our ability to sustain our fire service delivery model into the future. It is not all about fire service though; we are also looking at other disciplines operating within the emergency management system including search and rescue technicians, emergency managers, amateur radio operators and disaster social services training. All of these people are key to Alberta achieving our goal and remaining a "Province Prepared".

This has been a tremendously busy year already and there is more to be done to ensure that Albertans receive the best public safety service anywhere. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to meet these challenges and I thank you for all you have done to help us over this past year.

Stay Safe

E. David Hodgins CEM, S.B.St.J.
Managing Director,
Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Highlights

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Advance Notice:

Alberta Emergency Management Agency
will host the
2008 AGENCY STAKEHOLDER SUMMIT

Mark your calendars!

Date: October 29 and 30, 2008

Place: Executive Royal Inn Hotel & Conference Centre
8450 Sparrow Drive
Leduc, Alberta

Opening Keynote Address by:
Retired FEMA and Fire Administration Senior Official Charlie Dickinson,

This event is an opportunity for Fire and Emergency Management leaders and municipal officials to share ideas, collaborate and network.

Registration information will be sent out to AEMA contacts in September
For information, contact Adam.Armitage-Conway@gov.ab.ca

"Alberta – A Province Prepared"

Federal perspective update

Fire/emergency management collaboration

BY COLIN BLAIR, Executive Director, Training and Administration, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

During the last week of June, the federal, provincial and territorial deputy ministers for emergency management met in Quebec City (at which point I must acknowledge the City's 400th Anniversary in 2008). On the agenda were a number of decision/action and information items. The two priority action items discussed were the National Strategy and Action Plan for Critical Infrastructure and the National Public Alerting System. The Federal Disaster Assistance Initiative and the National Disaster Mitigation Strategy were also discussed as well as a number of information items including Pandemic Planning, the National Emergency Response System, Aboriginal Emergency Management, Best Practices and Multi-year Planning.

The agenda items are set by the ministers and deputy ministers. Each of the agenda items are supported by established federal/provincial/territorial working groups that focus on mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The working groups in turn report to the Senior Officials Representing Emergency Management.

In addition, there was discussion of how to bring the Canadian Council of Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners closer together to both the Canadian Council of Emergency Management Organizations and the Senior Officials Representing Emergency Management.

Throughout the year, discussions and meetings will continue between the deputy ministers, the senior officials and working groups in preparation for the ministers' meeting, which will be held in Alberta in January 2009.

The Alberta Emergency Notification System

Connecting to communities during a crisis

BY APRIL DIVER, Warning Systems Coordinator, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

An exciting new service to municipalities, Métis Settlements and First Nations was launched in May 2008. The Alberta Emergency Notification System (AENS) will enable the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (the agency) to connect with communities during an emergency event. The AENS can provide critical information to all emergency managers throughout the province in a short period of time. This unique ability will enhance the co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation of all organizations involved in the prevention, preparedness and response to disasters and emergencies in Alberta.

The AENS is for key personnel in emergency management

The AENS was established by the agency to ensure that critical emergency management information could be disseminated by the agency to a wide number of partners during a significant event. The AENS is not a "public" warning system – it is instead for key personnel involved in emergency management. The AENS can be used to call fire chiefs, deputy fire chiefs, directors of Emergency Management and deputy directors, chief administrative officers and First Nation directors of Disaster Services. It can rapidly call any combination of roles and geographical destinations, based on the event, those affected and the type of information being provided. For example, an activation of the Government Emergency Operations Centre may be announced through this system, providing affected municipalities with essential contact details to government resources.

This unique ability will enhance the co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation of all organizations involved...

In addition to its use during real events, the AENS is tested bi-monthly with all partners. Regular tests of the system help to ensure its resilience and familiarity with the system, while also improving the service through the feedback received from our emergency management partners.

This system is an added enhancement in our ability to ensure that appropriate actions can be taken within the province of Alberta to effectively ensure the protection of people, their property, their communities and industry and their environment from the effects of emergency events.

If you have any questions about this new service, please contact AEMA at 780-422-9000 or send us an email at aema@gov.ab.ca.

A primer on the new Safety, Security and Environment Institute

BY PAT HENNEBERRY, Director, Research, Training and Accreditation, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Some readers may be unfamiliar with the Safety, Security and Environment Institute (SSEI) and a refresher of sorts will be handy for others. This article is intended to provide some background and an update on some of the exciting activities and progress surrounding the institute.

The institute was established as a direct result of the Alberta Environmental Protection Commission's report on the Lake Wabamun train derailment in 2005. The Institute is a non-government, not-for-profit organization and, when fully established, will be led by an independent board of directors comprised of leaders from key stakeholder groups including industry, academia, government, non-governmental organizations, emergency management organizations and the public.

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency (the agency) has taken the lead in getting the SSEI established, in close cooperation with other provincial government partners. The agency has committed to annual funding of approximately $425,000 per year, to the end of the 2010-11 fiscal year. The SSEI will channel its efforts on emergency management needs in Alberta by way of:

Research – focusing on identified knowledge gaps and conducted through contracts and grants. Knowledge from around the world will be accessed to ensure that the SSEI projects do not duplicate solutions already available elsewhere;

Post Incident Trends and Analyses – analyzing incident trends, reviewing significant incidents in Alberta and disseminating lessons learned from Alberta and global incidents;

Knowledge Transfer – gathering and disseminating a broad base of knowledge on safety, security and the environment through publications, libraries and on-line resources, and;

Education and Training – conducting gap analysis of existing training; the professional development of institute researchers and staff; and organizing and hosting conferences, seminars and other events.

The institute is a high priority for the Alberta Government and was specifically noted in the last Throne Speech.

A business case and business plan were completed and are now undergoing updates where necessary. A logic model or "roadmap" for ongoing activities is in place and is amended as required, and a draft institute organization and terms of reference for the secretariat and some of the other positions in the SSEI have been developed.

Behind the scenes

The institute is a high priority for the Alberta Government and was specifically noted in the last Throne Speech. Much work behind the scenes has been conducted by the advisory committee and agency staff, including reviews of governance models, review of priority research projects, gathering information on how to establish the Institute as a legal entity and, for the long term, discussion on staffing and much more.

Perhaps one of the most exciting events in the past couple of months is that the agency was approached by two University of Calgary professors to fund a project proposal, submitted to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERCC) "... to study, analyze, model, simulate and propose improvements to plans and systems that are in place to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters: Alberta floods, prairie tornadoes..." The agency and Alberta Environment, on behalf of the SSEI, have committed to equal cost sharing of $25,000 for three years, which will complement the Calgary Fire Department's three-year commitment of an additional $25,000 annually, and a potential $100,000 commitment from NSERCC, again for three years. This project proposal, if accepted by NSERCC, is especially relevant to the problem of flooding in Alberta, a near annual issue causing multi-million dollar losses, and is an outstanding example of cooperation by all orders of government and with academia.

Employment opportunity

Our next major step is to hire a contractor to speed the processes necessary to get the SSEI fully functional. Among other things, the contractor will, by the end of the fiscal year, be expected to: conduct additional reviews of proposals and make recommendations and gain funding commitments for at least three more projects, preferably in partnership with other organizations; identify and, with steering committee approval, establish an institute governance model; commence the formal, legal establishment of the institute; expand contact with potential partners and stakeholders; review and revise staff and board terms of reference to the point they are ready for implementation; commence the hiring process of the secretariat, and; finalize arrangements for the physical location of that secretariat. At the time of writing this article, three potential contractors had been identified and it is hoped that one of them will be in place in the very near future.

Another progress report will be in the next issue of *Alberta FIREnews*, so stay tuned!

For more information, please contact Pat Henneberry at 780-427-8711 or email pat.henneberry@gov.ab.ca

Hectic fire season start

Almost on cue with the start of the 2008 fire season, firefighters in Thorhild County were busy battling blazes in their area. In fact, from May 8 to May 22, 2008 the county experienced four fairly major fires.

The first three fires were in the southern part of the county. While still putting out a fire near Opal, a call came in about a fire in the county's northwest corner near Newbrook. Being closest, the Newbrook Fire Hall responded first but then called Brett Demary, Thorhild County Emergency Services Coordinator of Safety and District Chief for the Thorhild County Fire Department for back up. Luckily, firefighters from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) were already in the area, so they provided assistance along with firefighters in the county.

Many of the personnel involved in putting out the Thorhild fires.

SRD lends a helping hand

"Despite the resources that responded, the fire was still getting out of hand so an official call was made to SRD for mutual aid. By 5:30 p.m. on May 17, a state of emergency had been declared in Thorhild County," said Dan Small, Thorhild County Manager. Heavy equipment was brought in, SRD brought in water bombers and tankers. Highway 63 was closed down and the railroad lines coming through the county were closed off. All assets from the county were tied up with the Newbrook fire. Sturgeon County was asked to provide back up for the rest of the county.

"In total, close to 200 firefighters battled the blaze and had it pretty much contained by the following Thursday, May 24, and at 5:15 p.m. that day the state of emergency was lifted," noted Demary.

To take control of the situation, Demary and SRD Wildfire Prevention Officer Wes Nimco established a unified command – a first for Alberta – and handled the operations side while the county's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) provided service and support, including providing items for displaced people during the voluntary evacuation.

"The county's EOC was up and running at the county office in Thorhild as soon as the state of emergency was declared," said Small. "A staging area was also set up at the Newbrook community centre to deal with the evacuation of the town of Newbrook."

Aerial view of the Newbrook fire.

The Newbrook fire covered 1900 acres and destroyed one house. At press time, the fire was still under investigation.

While fires take place across Alberta every year, the Newbrook fire had a few extra twists:

- it was the fourth in a series of back-to-back fires in the county
- the county fire chief had only been on board for one and a half months
- it also took place at the start of a long weekend, which further hampered abilities to communicate with people.

Regardless, it was handled well.

While Demary credits his 20 years in the military for some of the results, he's also quick to point out the great work provided by hall chiefs Nick Kuzyk with Newbrook and Al Crane with Thorhild. "These guys and all the firefighters involved did a tremendous job of working together as one very efficient and energetic team," added Demary. "At the height of the rescue effort, we had 36 of our volunteer firefighters on the ground working their butts off. They are true professionals."

County manager Small added that he was proud of the community effort involved in the event.

"We really stretched our resources," said Small, "but I am extremely pleased by the way that everyone in the area chipped in. Many people were doing jobs unfamiliar to them but that didn't matter. They just helped out wherever help was needed."

Lessons learned

The lessons learned from practice sessions and table top exercise were very useful during these fires, stated Small, pointing out that since the fires have been doused, they have conducted debriefings of various sectors, such as the reception centre and the emergency operations centre.

"The debriefings have been helpful in determining what worked and areas where improvements can be made," added Small. "We are also planning a major debriefing of all the sectors to make sure that we can learn from our experiences."

Sharing knowledge gained

BY JIM SMITH, Deputy Fire Chief, Okotoks Fire Department

The old adage "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" is a great marketing tool, but not something I'm going to follow.

I had the honour of going to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Fire and Life Safety conference in May as one of the Alberta delegates. Rather than leave the information in Vegas, I'd prefer to share what I learned with everyone who can benefit from it.

Fire and life safety

The first part of the meeting was to find out more about NFPA and who's who in the zoo, so to speak. The NFPA has committed itself to fire and life safety so much that this was the first meeting ever of members from all 50 states, 10 provinces and three territories. I must admit that a lot of people were from State Fire Marshall Offices and provincial Fire Commissioner Offices. I was the only one from Canada that was from an operational department. The NFPA has committed its statistical resources as well as its backing for fire prevention for the betterment of fire and life safety.

Originally I thought that this may be just another "rah rah" type meeting but I was pleasantly surprised at the outcome. We were given a tremendous amount of statistics (which are American in content) to digest. The NFPA said that they could do the same for Canada (which is great) but unfortunately there is currently no one organization that gathers national statistics in our country.

Provided below are some of the 2006 United States fire loss statistics provided to us:

- Every 19 seconds a fire department responded to a fire
- One outside fire was reported every 38 seconds
- One structure fire was reported every 60 seconds
- One home structure fire was reported every 80 seconds
- One vehicle fire was reported every 113 seconds
- One civilian fire injury was reported every 32 minutes
- One civilian fire death occurred every 2 hours and 42 minutes

Source: Fire loss in the United States during 2006, by Michael J. Karter, Jr., Quincy, MA, 02169; August 2007

As a practicing fire personnel, I question why there is no national depository for national fire administration, from which provincial and territory statistics can be coordinated into one unified statistical voice. Perhaps through meetings with provincial and national associations and organizations across Canada, this gap can be corrected.

Most of the information for fire and life safety is free on the NFPA website, which is great; however, the web site isn't the easiest to navigate. You need time and patience to navigate the NFPA website – www.nfpa.org – and find the information that you need. If you do not have time to navigate the NFPA website or do not have a computer, the information can be received directly from the NFPA by email, phone or regular mail.

Sean Tracey

Sean Tracey, our national representative to the NFPA, is quite willing to help with information, talks, conferences, exhibits, workshops and general information. Sean has been very helpful with all things NFPA and can be reached at 613-830-9102 or stracey@nfpa.org.

Art Pullan

Art Pullan is part of NFPA as well as the Executive Director of the Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council. He is also a great resource for fire prevention material and can be contacted at 416-325-3152 or art.pullan@firesafetycouncil.com.

As outlined at the conference, NFPA's strategic plan is to:

- focus on home fires
- increase outreach to state/provincial fire marshals
- increase outreach with fire departments
- increase resources for the NFPA Public Education Division (fire and life safety)
- use the NFPA website as a depository of information.

They also indicated that the duties of the Provincial Public Educators Network are to pass along information, communicate with grass roots organizations and work through provincial the Fire Marshal's Offices/Fire Commissioner Offices, educator associations, etc.

Presentations at the conference

The NFPA also pointed out that they have been behind many fire and life safety

Alberta's representative at the 2008 NFPA conference

Jim Smith, Deputy Fire Chief with the Okotoks Fire Department, was chosen as Alberta's representative at the 2008 National Fire Protection Association conference held in Las Vegas, Nevada on May 31-June 2 at the Mandalay Bay Hotel. A member of the FIPEN group and very involved in fire and life safety public education efforts in Okotoks, he was asked to attend the conference and provide feedback to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.

When told about the invitation, Smith said he was flabbergasted and thrilled that they thought of him. "It was indeed a great honour to serve as Alberta's representative. It was truly a wonderful learning experience, especially in terms of networking with other individuals in the country and across the United States."

Smith advised that this year's conference was an inaugural one for public safety educators. "They usually haven't been part of the conference, but this year they chose to include one person from each state and province, making it an incredibly valuable opportunity for us in the fire service." Smith also noted that the NFPA has dedicated a lot of resources to Canada, and has opened lines of communication with a number of groups and organizations.

One of the things that Smith found most amazing, though, was the depth of statistics that the NFPA has collected, and is concerned that nothing similar is available at a national level in Canada.

Some of the many public safety educators at the 2008 NFPA conference.

issues. For example, the Home Sprinkler Coalition made a presentation on the value of home sprinklers and the value added to home fire safety with smoke detectors and fire prevention strategies. Similarly, the Safe Cigarette Campaign made a presentation for safe cigarettes that will self extinguish if not used. These were but a couple of the numerous presentations at the conference. I could not possibly list them all; besides a list would probably bore many of you. And truth be known, I must admit that I did take advantage of the location and my first trip to Las Vegas to walk along the strip to see the sights.

campaigns that are not fire department driven and the fire service can certainly benefit from these organizations as from the NFPA's stamp of approval on important

All in all, for a one-day conference in Las Vegas, there was an incredible amount of information provided. Equally important, it provided a huge networking opportunity that will definitely be valuable for me and for the fire service in Alberta. I want to personally thank Mahendra Wijayasinghe for sending me. I hope that many of you will also have the opportunity to experience what fire and life safety education can do for you and those in your community.

For more information contact Jim Smith, Deputy Fire Chief, Okotoks Fire Department at jsmith@okotoks.ca or call 1-403-938-4066

Supporting other provinces

Alberta perspective on New Brunswick flooding

BY DOUG FORGE and BRAD ANDRES, Emergency Management Officers, Hazard Planning, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Our first look at the St. John river in flood was the night drive in from the airport. Water was lapping both sides of the road and the normally kilometre-wide river had spread out to two and a half kilometres. The view from the river bank the following morning was incredible!

Putting our skills to the test

Brad Andres and I volunteered to assist the New Brunswick emergency measures organization with their St. John river flood operations. In total we were to spend nine days in Fredericton at the provincial emergency operations centre. Following our visit would be emergency management officers from both Manitoba and Quebec. In what is to become the new norm, provincial emergency management officers can and will find themselves tasked to support other provinces in times of manpower need. If you get the chance to undertake an assignment ... take it! It is an opportunity to put all your skills to the test and meet some great people.

Learning something new about managing emergencies

We were warmly welcomed in Fredericton and within a day were fully integrated into the New Brunswick organization. I was assigned the provincial recovery plan, while Brad was involved in the day-to-day current operations. We have come to learn that each province can teach us something new about managing emergencies; from New Brunswick they showed how to really integrate public communications into the response effort. The trip showed that there must be only one emergency management system in Canada and whichever model is chosen, all must use it. This will allow for emergency management professionals to be fully interchangeable across the country in times of crisis, as we all speak the same language and follow the same operational procedures.

Project sustainability and the Community Injury Control Fund

BY JOHN FISHER, Grant Program Coordinator, Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research

Among its many services to Alberta communities and to injury-related causes, the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR) also offers grant support through the Community Injury Control Fund (CICF) to community organizations wishing to address local injury problems. Since the CICF started in 2000, fire departments from Grande Cache to Bonnnyville and from Picture Butte to High Prairie and Fort McMurray have taken the lead to address such potential injury issues as child safety, home smoke detectors, fire safety, the Smart Risk program and even a playground restoration project.

Awards for Sustainability

One of the expectations of project managers who receive grant awards from the CICF is for project sustainability. Grant applicants are specifically asked to *"Describe the next steps you will take to sustain the project after the CICF grant expires."*

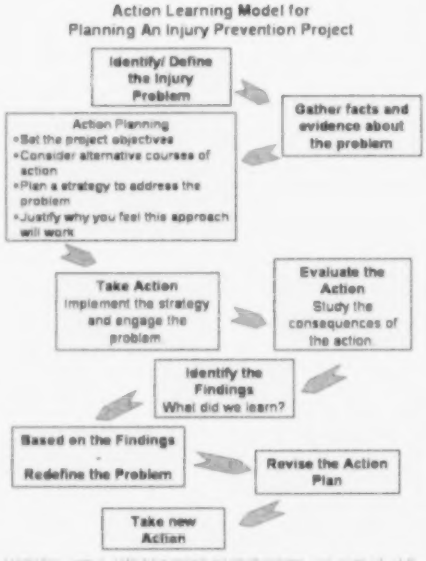
This expectation, of course, assumes the project will successfully meet its objectives, produce positive outcomes, be well managed and worthy of continuance. Now, this whole business of sustainability can get a little complicated if you're not careful.

Sustainability in its simplest form describes a characteristic of a process or state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. Aside from its usual applications to development and resources, the virtue of sustainability has been attributed to everything from art to eating to fashion to tourism to landscape architecture.

For the grant application writer, the requirement for a project sustainability plan probably reads like an accusation – *"Who will you get to fund this project next year, and why don't you go to them in the first place?"*

Currently CICF funding is restricted to one-time support for projects that must be completed within a single year. But is it reasonable to presume that after a single delivery the project has appropriately defined the problem, worked out all of its delivery strategy difficulties, produced positive outcomes usually in the form of changed attitudes and behaviours, and that it is now capable of attracting funders anxious to jump on the bandwagon?

Alberta Centre for INJURY Control & Research


Action Learning Model for
Planning An Injury Prevention Project
Identify/ Define the Injury Problem
Gather facts and evidence about the problem
Action Planning
•Set the project objectives
•Consider alternative courses of action
•Plan a strategy to address the problem
•Justify why you feel this approach will work
Take Action
Implement the strategy and engage the problem
Evaluate the Action
Study the consequences of the action
Identify the Findings
What did we learn?
Based on the Findings
-
Redefine the Problem
Revise the Action Plan
Take new Action

Granting agencies on the other hand, often constrained by a Utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number, are obliged to spread the grant largess around and to avoid letting the fund become inaccessible because of commitments of ongoing support to a limited number of projects.

Therein lays a fundamental dilemma. If a project successfully addresses an important injury prevention need, why wouldn't the CICF want to continue its support rather than see the project decline because of the energy-sapping distractions of finding alternate support funds?

If funders expect sustainability of funded projects, is it not reasonable for project managers to expect funders to be responsible for providing leadership, expert advice, best practices, policy development and performance measurement and monitoring related to the sustainability of injury prevention projects? Should funders not be held responsible for the development and implementation of strategic approaches to project sustainability and for the provision of expertise, standards and research? Good questions.

Extending the grant program

After examining this problem, the CICF is preparing to extend the theoretical framework of the grant program to emphasize an "action learning" model for injury prevention project development. Such a model allows for the continuous improvement of projects that can evolve good practices and improved results over the course of a series of deliveries. Project managers who engage in a process of learning from the results of their evaluations, redefining the problem and adjusting the action plan will be eligible for renewed CICF funding support. The requirement for a viable sustainability plan in the grant application will be dropped.

This change of emphasis by the CICF will not solve the grant program's budget constraints, but it does allow projects of merit that have strong community support, that consistently meet their objectives and that practice deliberate and disciplined continuous improvement to find extended funding support.

2008 Conference wrap up

BY BILL PURDY, AFCA Executive Director

The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) concluded a highly informative and successful conference at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton on June 11, 2008. A total of 285 fire chiefs and other associates and 105 trade members registered for the three and half day event. Participants of the opening ceremonies included the Honourable Norman Kwong and Mrs. Kwong, Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Ray Danyluk, a number of other Alberta cabinet ministers, MLAs and representatives of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. Fire service members from Edmonton Fire and Rescue and the Edson and District Fire Service provided the Honour Guard and colour party.

Traditional fire chief's white helmet

For his commitment to addressing the high-intensity residential fire problem in Alberta, making Alberta a safer place to live and work, Minister Danyluk was presented with the traditional fire chief's white helmet and made an honourary member of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association.

The conference theme – *Pressure and Prosperity* – set the tone for the various sessions. Topics on fire-related issues being impacted by our current prosperity provided the delegates with many subjects to discuss. Fire Chief Randy Wolsey, Edmonton Fire and Rescue, made a presentation on high-intensity residential fires in Edmonton and other Alberta municipalities, which last month resulted in the Government of Alberta accepting 18 of 22 recommendations from the report prepared for Minister Danyluk by our members and other representatives from industry and the public. This is the first step and the association will continue to monitor and work with the Government of Alberta to address all the concerns identified in the Alberta Building and Fire Codes.

Derek King of Brownlee LLP presented a session on "Legal Liabilities in Provision of the Fire Service" which generated great discussion on the impact of liability on the Alberta Fire Service without proper protection within Alberta regulations.

Dave Hodgins, Managing Director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), presented an overview of the agency, including future plans and how the plans will interact with the fire service.

The delegates approved three resolutions:

- membership fee increases were approved.
- a committee of the AFCA and AEMA will be developed to look at producing a study of the recruitment and retention issues in the fire service and making recommendations to address this critical issue.
- an emergent resolution sponsored by the AFCA board, dealing with the provincial takeover of ground ambulance service, was also approved.

Ambulance service challenges

At the present time, the fire service operates a significant number of ambulance services in Alberta. In many of the ambulance services not operated by the fire service, the fire service is relied on as medical first responders. The changes announced by the Ministry of Health have not considered the impact on the fire service nor has there been any meaningful consultation with the fire service on the impacts. The resolution calls on the Alberta government to include the AFCA in any and all further deliberations on the transfer of ground ambulance services so we can minimize the impact of this change to municipal fire services and not increase the recruitment and retention problems we already face.

Our new Board for 2008-09 is:

- **President:** Brian McEvoy, Bonnyville
- **First Vice President:** Brian Cornforth, Lethbridge
- **Second Vice President:** Glenda Dales, Mundare
- **Directors at Large:** Cammie Laird, Rocky Mountain House; Trevor Mistal, Sturgeon County; and Al Schram, Edson.
- **Regional Directors:** Region 1 Brian Ballard, Saddle Hills County; Region 2 Bill Graham, Barrhead; Region 3 John Helton, Lamont; Region 4 Peter Krich, Camrose; Region 5 Bill Garries, Bentley; Region 6 Graham Clark, Municipal District of Foothills; and Region 7 Greg Erickson, Cardston
- **Trade member:** Harvey Dussault, Red Deer
- **Alberta Industrial Fire Protection Association member:** Don Keenan, Shell Canada
- **President advisors:** Randy Wolsey, Edmonton and Ron Robinson, Medicine Hat.

The 2009 conference will be held in Red Deer, May 23-27, 2009.

For more information, contact the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Executive Director – Bill Purdy
P.O. Box 38, Wabamun, AB T0E 2K0
Office Phone: 780-892-2125, Cell: 780-719-7939
Email: bpurdy@xplornet.com, Web: www.afca.ab.ca

Mock wildfire exercise helps prepare emergency response crews

On June 13 and 14 , 2008 the Government of Alberta teamed up with several municipal partners to conduct a mock wildfire exercise west of Hinton. Operation West Yellowhead helped test local emergency response systems and served as a training opportunity to better prepare local agencies to respond if a wildfire were to threaten rural properties and the Town of Hinton.

"Wildfires pose a very serious threat to communities nestled within Alberta's forests," said Kevin Freehill, Foothills Wildfire Prevention Officer. "By preparing our emergency responders and engaging residents in **FireSmart** activities we can better protect Albertans and their communities from the threat of wildfire."

Over the course of the exercise, firefighters reacted to a simulated wildfire that burned near the communities of Seabolt, Grandview and Maskuta Estates. Simulated smoke, firefighting aircraft and ground crews made for a very dynamic and realistic exercise.

Several residents even participated in a voluntary evacuation from their homes. The 'evacuees' joined about 400 other residents from Hinton and area at the nearby KOA Kampground to watch emergency services personnel protect homes and battle the mock wildfire.

"This exercise was an indisputable example of inter-agency cooperation in the Hinton area at its finest," commented Roger Nordick, Hinton Fire Chief. "I think all the agencies that participated will be better prepared in the event a wildfire threatens a community, and I hope the lessons learned will help municipalities from across the province in our efforts to protect the citizens we serve."

Participants in the exercise included: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Emergency Management Agency, Yellowhead County, the Town of Hinton, Kinder Morgan, Fortis, Yellowhead Gas Coop and various other emergency response agencies. The information gathered from the two-day event forms the basis of training material to help better prepare municipalities across Alberta to respond to similar emergencies.

Simulated smoke was used to mark the advancement of the mock wildfire.

Participants in the mock wildfire exercise receive a briefing prior to being dispatched.

Alberta's **FireSmart** program provides proactive ways to protect against the threat of wildfire while promoting enhanced environmental stewardship, ecological benefits and the prevention of wildfires. To learn more about the program, visit www.srd.alberta.ca/wildfires/firesmart.

Mock Wildfire Exercise Schedule

Friday, June 13th

4:30 pm – Mock wildfire detected by local wildfire lookout observer and reported to Foothills Area Forest Fire Centre.

5:30 pm – Briefing provided to incoming Evacuation and Structure Prot personnel.

6 pm - 9 pm – Door-to-door one-hour evacuation alert given to residents of three subdivisions.

Saturday, June 15th

10 am – Morning debrief meeting for all operations staff.

11 am – Incident command transferred to a Type I team with a unified command between Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and the Yellowhead County. Reception centre open to the public.

10:45 am - 2 pm – Smoke machine and smoke canisters created fire simulation.

11:30 am – Fire reported to be moving rapidly toward residents of rural subdivisions.

12 pm – Air tanker demonstration drop.

12:30 pm – Spot fires from the wildfire from igniting fires in the subdivision. Structural fires reported, municipal emergency response teams deployed to the area.

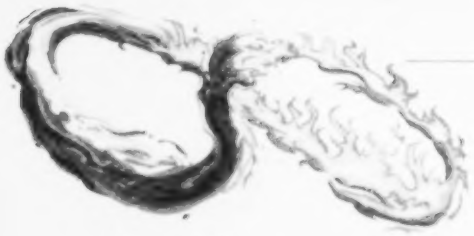
1 pm – Fires spread to other structures, west Hinton placed on evacuation notice.

1:30 pm – Municipal firefighters redeployed to structural fires as they continue to spread through the subdivision. Fire continues to spread towards a major transportation corridor and the Town of Hinton.

2 pm – Exercise is completed and operations demobilized.

3:30 pm – Debrief of exercise for all operations staff.

Apparatus sustainability



BY DON HENRY, CFPS CD, Instructor, Auto/Diesel & Fire Apparatus Maintenance School of Trades and Technology, Lakeland College

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, sustainability means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Repairing and maintaining equipment

Let's talk about sustainability from an apparatus maintenance point of view. From my work as Chair of the Apparatus Maintenance Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, (IAFC), I have found that fire chiefs want to leave their fire departments in better shape both financial and morally than they found it. With fire chiefs facing decreasing budgets and increasing expenses, the chief may be tempted to reduce the maintenance budget (you do have a maintenance budget, right?). Reducing the maintenance budget may work for the short term if you have been doing a proper preventive or pro-active maintenance schedule until now. However, such action would not be sustainable. It will only lead to increased breakdowns and costly repairs in the future, not to mention a decrease in the public's confidence in your department's ability to deliver service. If you only repair and maintain equipment when it quits working, then you have already embraced the concept of crisis maintenance. Crisis maintenance is marked by statements such as "don't go looking for trouble", "it's never done that before", "what's that noise", "don't worry, it will go away" or, my personal favorite, "the B shift did it".

"To do" list

So how do we get off this insanity treadmill and on to the path of a sustainable future for your department? There are three things you need to do.

1. Understand the life cycles of your apparatus. These life cycles include: the service life cycle, the economic life cycle, and the technological life cycle. Each life cycle is different. By fully understanding these different life cycles, you will be able to successfully justify the replacement schedule for apparatus to your local government (assuming you do have a schedule for replacement).

2. Stop employing a crisis maintenance attitude and embrace, at the very least, a preventive maintenance schedule that reflects the uses of your department, not the department down the road. Even better, use a proactive program that uses such tools as fluid and oil analysis. Fire apparatus are complex machines that require competent, trained personnel. Get a copy of NFPA 1071 and follow it for both your pump operators (NFPA 1002) and your emergency vehicle technicians. Train your emergency vehicle technicians (EVT) or employ only persons that can prove they are EVTs. Make sure you are using a daily/weekly and monthly inspection checklist for your apparatus.

3. Ensure that your next truck meets at least the NFPA 1901 or ULC S-515. Remember that both of these standards are MINIMUM standards. Overweight trucks have no place in the fire service. I started helping departments "spec out" trucks because I quickly realized that if the truck was made correctly from the start, you would have a chance of reaching sustainability. See Figure 1 at the left.

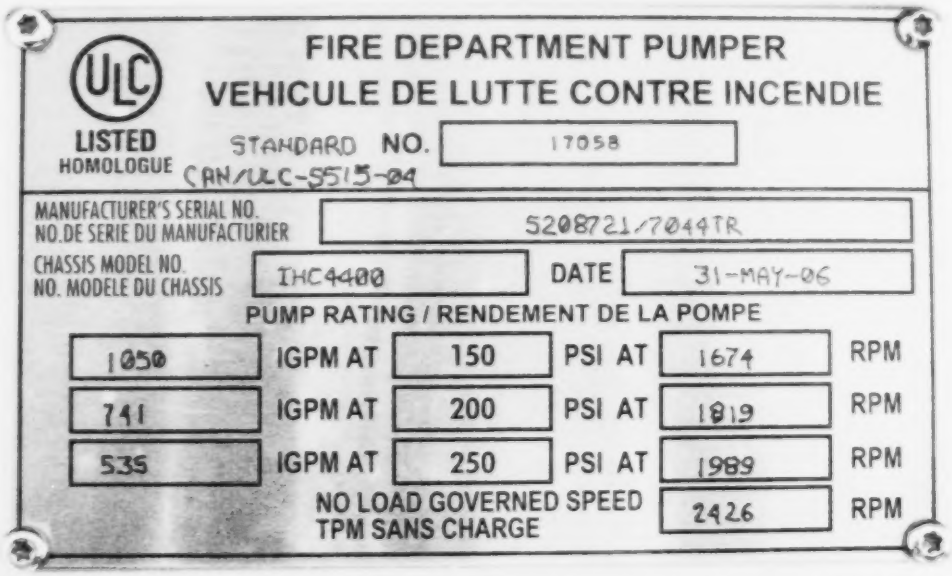


Figure 1 – pump panel from a truck at **fire etc.** *that completely meets all of ULC-S515-04, not just the pump test.*

24 hour response readiness centre ready for action

BY COLIN LLOYD, Executive Director, Planning and Operations, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency 'soft launched' the Agency Response Readiness Centre (ARCC) on May 5, 2008. Popularly referred to as the 'ARRC', the Response Readiness Centre offers a 24/7/365 capability to ensure the agency is constantly at a state of operational response readiness, with the emphasis on ensuring the right people are dispatched to the right place at the right time to provide the support our communities require. As the agency has evolved, and as we have continued to listen to our partners and stakeholders in communities, industry and government, we realize that the agency's most critical function is to 'be there' in support of those we serve. We cannot hope to be successful in this regard if we cannot consistently provide a rapid, efficient and sustainable response to specified emergencies around the province. The ARRC is critical to assuring this response capability.

Critical event emergencies

In explaining our response philosophy, it is well understood that literally thousands of emergencies in the province are handled by community and industry-based first response organizations within their existing capabilities and resources. The agency is more concerned with those cases where an emergency, through scale or complexity, requires or is likely to require expertise and resources from the Government of Alberta. We have classified this sort of emergency as a critical event, and the Agency Critical Event Response Plan (CERP), which was signed by David Hodgins on September 18, 2007, outlines the agency's immediate response to communities, industry and government for the protection of life, property and the environment. Grounded in the principles of the incident command system, the CERP guides the agency duty manager on how and when to dispatch agency resources and the process for staying connected to the event as it develops. The ARRC provides a critical service for the duty manager by gathering and analyzing information on the event and, with information on the disposition of agency and other Government of Alberta resources, enables robust and consistent decision making.

While the CERP is a significant improvement over what was previously in place, there was no question that the single biggest gap in the agency's response readiness system was the lack of ability to monitor, reach out and provide dispatch notification and support to the agency field officers (fire safety officers and emergency management and First Nation district officers) responding to both critical and non-critical events. The ARRC was developed out of the identified need to have dedicated staff on duty 24/7 focused on ensuring that we were aware of developing emergencies and their implications within communities and ensuring the duty manager and senior agency staff had the information necessary to make decisions on how best to support our communities – every time.

Notification of agency staff

Amidst a growing range of duties, the ARRC also facilitates the appropriate notification of agency staff for routine duties and functions, such as fire investigations and other support to communities not falling within the CERP.

Other ARRC functions include:

- the ability to track and monitor all agency responses and provide instant situational awareness to the agency senior management team and the duty manager
- provision of a constant monitoring and surveillance capability for all activities of interest to the agency provincially, nationally and internationally
- a media monitoring capability in real time through a media monitoring site such as Canadian Press to ensure situational awareness within the agency
- the ability to collect, analyze and disseminate information from all sources on matters that fall within the agency's area of responsibility and interest
- the ability to maintain the status of all agency staff deployed to an event under the Lone Worker Program
- the provision of daily situational updates to the Managing Director and Minister, as well as specific situation reports to affected members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament.

The ARRC is being developed to monitor all agency responses and associated activities, and will be the one-stop shop for emergency event management until it is concluded or needs to be handed over to the Government Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC). Also housed within the agency, the GEOC is activated to support the Government of Alberta response to large scale events.

The ARRC is also being developed with another theme in mind – that of customer service. As we move towards its full launch in early September, we will be connecting with our fire and emergency management partners to establish how the ARRC can respond to their needs and serve them better. This will be the exciting piece, as we explore the potential of the ARCC together.

For more information, contact arrc@gov.ab.ca or call 1-866-618-AEMA (2362)

Edmonton Fire and Rescue organizes Fire Summit II

Focusing on seniors' accommodations

Following on the success of Fire Summit I, which resulted in significant changes to the building and fire codes in relation to high-intensity residential fires, Edmonton Fire and Rescue recently organized Fire Summit II.

Fire Summit II took place on May 26, 2008 with more than 75 attendees from the public, private and not-for-profit sector. The summit addressed two key issues:

- aging in place/appropriate accommodations, and
- single family residential care facilities.

"Within the growing number of seniors in Edmonton and Alberta, there is an increasing number who require a greater level of care. But finding appropriate accommodation for this segment of the population has become increasingly difficult," explained Ken Block, Deputy Fire Chief, Public Safety, Edmonton Fire and Rescue.

Summit attendees provided very clear suggestions and ideas about ways to better accommodate seniors and how to deal with some of the problems that currently exist, such as the lack of life-safety features in some buildings. Of utmost importance was the realization that better communication needs to take place between the various groups involved.

"We consider Summit II a great success," added Ken Block. "We wanted to get a dialogue started on these two very important issues and that certainly happened. We also got the attention of the right people – those who are part of the community and the decision makers involved in accommodations for seniors. Excellent ideas were put forward and there was genuine enthusiasm to begin working together."

Block advises that, while no firm action has been determined yet, it is likely that a task force will be established with representatives from the public, private, not-for-profit and government sectors.

Stay tuned for more updates in *Alberta FIREnews* about the outcomes of Summit II.

Celebrating Aboriginal Day

Fire service involvement in Aboriginal Day

On June 18, the City of Edmonton celebrated 2008 National Aboriginal Day at City Hall, and the fire service was well represented. In addition to a trade booth, Edmonton Fire and Rescue sent along some of their firefighters.

The day reflected the true spirit of Alberta's Aboriginal people. Starting with an opening prayer and then opening remarks from Lewis Cardinal, Master of Ceremonies, the event also included a children's choir, Inuit throat singers, Métis dancers and traditional First Nations dancers. Soup and bannock were served as well.

Special thanks goes out to Edmonton Fire and Rescue for their involvement in this event.

Top left and middle: Edmonton Fire and Rescue personnel with representatives from the Aboriginal community; Far right: Two of the Aboriginal Day Celebration performers.

Prevention strategy and recommendations completed

As indicated in the February 2008 issue of *Alberta FIREnews*, the Fire and Injury Prevention Educators' Network (FIPEN) Steering Committee set five priorities for fire and unintentional injury risks facing Albertans:

- seniors (high risk of fire death and falls)
- home/residential fires and injury issues
- arson and vandalism fires
- motor vehicle-related injuries, and
- injuries among teens and young adults.

Members of FIPEN were divided into working groups on each of the five priority issues. Additional stakeholders and subject experts were invited as needed. With the assistance of a consultant, the working groups researched, reviewed current and potential solutions, discussed delivery systems, program effectiveness and measurements for their priority issue using a common template. Wherever possible, the working groups recommended connecting with existing programs and groups to reduce duplication and improve collaboration and consistency of messaging across disciplines in Alberta.

What is FIPEN?

FIPEN, the Fire and Injury Prevention Educators' Network, is a collaboration of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, Alberta fire/emergency services, and the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR) who have been tasked with examining current risks to Albertans in terms of fire and unintentional injuries and recommending preventative public education strategies.

The end result of the work done by the working groups was the recommendation of the following projects within each priority:

Arson and vandalism fires

- Juvenile Fire-Setters
- General Public Arson/Vandalism Prevention Education
- Construction Site Arson Prevention
- First Nations Communities

Home/residential fires and injury issues

- Home Inspection Program
- After the Emergency Program

Injuries among teens and young adults

- Graduated Driver Licensing Education
- ATV Safety

Motor vehicle-related injuries

- Public Education/Awareness Project Plan
- Adult Option 4 Class Delivery

Seniors at a high risk of fire death and falls

- Finding Balance (falls prevention)
- Seniors Group Residence Inspection
- Professional Development

All of the plans were consolidated into one report, "Saving Lives: Moving Injury Prevention Forward in Alberta's Fire and Emergency Services," which includes a number of higher-level recommendations. In June 2008, FIPEN members reviewed all of the strategies and recommendations and are currently formulating a plan for moving forward. Final recommendations will be presented to the executive management team of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency in the fall.

For more information on FIPEN or to contribute to FIPEN activities, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Manager, Research & Analysis, Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-415-0546 or Mahendra.Wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca.

Getting to Know Fire workshops

Workshop offering proving very successful

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency is making available a new program through a series of workshops. The first class of the "Getting to Know Fire" workshops was held on June 16, 2008 in Edmonton.

The workshops are based on a very comprehensive 700 page binder that includes ready-made lesson plans for fire service personnel and others interested in increasing knowledge and awareness about fire safety and prevention. The binder also includes DVDs and videoclips.

"The program is tailored for the fire service and beyond. It's a really great program that provides something for all ages and all groups, from fire service personnel to health boards to 4-H clubs," said workshop facilitator Judy Harvie.

So far, about 20 workshops have been scheduled across the province.

The application form to register for workshops is posted at: www.aema.gov.ab.ca/documents/fco/Getting_to_Know_Fire_Flyer(1).doc

For more information please contact Gloria Mercer at AEMA. Phone 780-415-0548 or fax 780-422-1549 or email gloria.mercer@gov.ab.ca

Transportation news for first responders/ emergency management personnel

BY TERRY WALLACE, Director, Dangerous Goods and Rail Safety, Alberta Transportation

Recent transportation updates that impact first responders/emergency management include:

- The 2008 Emergency Response Guidebooks (ERG). Alberta Transportation has commenced distribution of the 2008 ERGs to first responders in Alberta. The 2008 ERG replaces the 2004 version currently in use by first responders. Our thanks to the staff at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency who are coordinate ing the distribution of the 2008 ERGs to the fire services.
- Transport Canada has enacted Amendment 6 to the federal Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) regulations. Included in these amendments are changes that clarify regulatory requirements, address safety issues and align the Canadian TDG regulations with the United Nations recommendations as well as the United States Hazardous Material Rules.
- On May 26, 2008 Transport Canada also introduced in the House of Commons amendments to the federal *Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act*. As amended, the Act would remain focused on the prevention of incidents involving dangerous goods while in the transportation phase.
- The proposed amendments introduce additional security requirements, and reinforce and strengthen the Emergency Response Assistance Plan Program (ERAPs) by allowing the federal government the option to use the existing ERAP program to help respond to CBRN incidents.

Fire Prevention Week – October 5 - 11, 2008

2008 campaign focuses on preventing home fires

Since 1922, the U.S. based National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has sponsored a fire prevention campaign each October to raise the public's awareness about the importance of fire safety throughout North America. The theme of the 2008 Fire Prevention Week is **"It's Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires!"**

This year's theme rings true for Alberta as well. Fires that happen in Alberta homes account for about 60% of all fire deaths in the province. One or two family dwellings, apartments/condos and mobile homes are the places where most fires start in Alberta when compared to all other places such as businesses and industrial properties. From October 5-11, 2008, fire safety advocates will be spreading the word to their communities that, with a little extra caution, preventing the leading causes of home fires in Alberta - cooking, heating, electrical, smoking-materials and arson/vandalism fires - is within their power. The 2008 campaign will urge the public to take steps to protect themselves and their homes by learning to prevent fire and taking action should a fire break out.

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency's (AEMA) website www.aema.gov.ab.ca will offer the following campaign items starting in mid August:

1. Fire Prevention Week 2008 campaign kit containing a theme article, home fire prevention articles, a home fire hazards checklist, safety tips, statistical information and messages from the Managing Director of AEMA and the Fire Commissioner.

2. Children's program designed for grades K to 3 in participating municipalities. The material includes an activity booklet, a letter to the fire chief, classroom teacher and parent/caregiver and a Fire Safety Education Success tracking form as well as instructions on implementing the program locally. Activity booklets will be shipped from the printer in August to municipal fire/emergency service departments in participating municipalities.

Other activities planned for this year's Fire Prevention Week include a kick-off event during the week, media interviews by AEMA staff, coverage in Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association (AWNA) papers and public service announcements. This year's Fire Prevention Week is sponsored by ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric.

For further information, contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Manager, Research & Analysis, AEMA at 780-415-0546 or mahendra.wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca

Taking a regional approach

Based on two reviews of municipal fire protection, Flagstaff County has moved to a regional approach for the coordination and direction of its fire service in 10 municipalities within the county. In September 2007, Kim Cannady was hired as the Regional Emergency Services Coordinator (RESC) for Flagstaff County, working out of the Flagstaff County building. A firefighter since 1984, Cannady came to Flagstaff County from Coaldale, where he was the assistant fire chief for six years.

Citing the need for better coordination of training and standard operating guidelines for all services, the Flagstaff Regional Partnership was formed to improve the delivery of municipal services for the residents of the region, which includes the towns of Daysland, Hardisty, Killam and Sedgewick and the villages of Alliance, Forestburg, Galahad, Heisler, Lougheed and Strome.

Changing times

During the reviews, area fire chiefs were interviewed and were all on board with the concept of a regional fire chief to assist with and coordinate activities around fire services. Many of those interviewed expressed concern about activities such as training, fire investigations, reporting and others that were time consuming.

"The old days of volunteer firefighters putting out a fire and returning back to work until the next call are gone," noted Cannady. "Today there is the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, National Fire Protection Association, *Safety Codes Act*, Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office, to name a few, legislating the "volunteer" fire chief and department to carry out duties that are time consuming, and therefore not always getting done."

As the RESC, he provides guidance and administrative support to all fire departments and the municipal offices for fire related matters. He also assists in determining levels of service for each fire department, and implements standard operating guidelines for each.

Responsibilities

Kim Cannady's responsibilities also include providing activity reports for the Emergency Services Committee, which is the liaison between the municipalities, and the Regional Emergency Services Coordinator.

"I think the RESC position is working out. Levels of service are being set, standard operating guidelines have been written and training programs are being implemented," added Cannady. "As well, the volunteer firefighters are benefiting from better access to training programs that are scheduled to fit with the schedule of our volunteers."

Cannady also points out that his position has taken on the role of Director of Emergency Management for Flagstaff County and he has been busy working on a Regional Emergency Response Plan. "The plan will assist us in having a better understanding of surrounding resources. And, with a full time person to look after these chores, the municipal emergency plans can be updated in a timely manner."

For more information about Flagstaff County's regional approach, contact Kim Cannady at 780-384-4100 or by email at kcannady@flagstaff.ab.ca

Sustainability of Alberta's fire service

BY CHAD SARTISON, Firefighter, Priddis Fire Department/CEO, The Fire Within

When we look at the fire service across Canada, surprisingly we have seen very little innovation when it comes to addressing the pressing issue of the sustainability of our volunteer fire service.

When it comes to innovation, we often joke (somewhat proudly) that the fire service represents 100 years of tradition unhindered by progress. Perhaps "innovation" snuck up on us, for one actually doesn't have to look very far to find great leaps in innovation on the fire ground.

Virtually every fire department in the country has worked systematically to re-invent its fire ground procedures in the name of firefighter safety and efficiency. On the other hand, few fire departments apply the same degree of diligence to management innovation.

What is "management innovation," and why is it important to the future of the fire service?

It's important because when it comes to advancing our strategies to attract and retain volunteers, the changes are roughly equivalent to stuffing our beards in our mouths. Sounds dramatic, I know, but if it weren't true then why are we so worried about the sustainability of the volunteer fire service across the country?

Management innovation can be defined as advancements in how an organization leads, coordinates, organizes and motivates its personnel. This is critical because historically it is widely accepted as creating greater value to a corporation's future than anything that has ever come out of a research and development laboratory or a focus group.

Corporations have long since identified management innovation as one of the single most influential factors in contributing to not only their success but their sustainability too. General Electric (GE), Ford and Visa are all hailed as successful management innovators.

What do we, as volunteer firefighters, have in common with corporate giants like GE?

Well one could argue that cumulatively across Canada we employ over 127,000 volunteer firefighters, yet, ironically, if we were to knock on 10 doors in a major urban centre, six out of 10 Canadians would not even know we exist. I will confidently bet you that GE's recall rate is somewhere in the 9.5 out of 10 range.

Despite the size of our volunteer organization, in the past 50 years we have done little to change how we attract, organize and motivate volunteers in the fire service. In contrast, the communities themselves from which we pull our volunteers have changed dramatically.

As I travel around the country, I see different provinces addressing the challenge of sustainability in different ways; some touch on management innovation but overall we seem to lack the focus that generates the results we see keeping us safe in fire ground innovation. If we are not careful, soon there may be no volunteer firefighters to protect.

If my travels have taught me one thing, it's that the "solution" to pay volunteers more is not management innovation, it's not sustainable and it is a dead end road. Every volunteer knows – we don't do it for the money. Besides, we barely pay our career counterparts enough so what makes us think this is anything more than a band-aid solution?

Chad Sartison

The answers are too far-reaching to begin to discuss in the confines of this article but suffice to say we must open our eyes to management innovation in the fire hall if the volunteer fire service is to be sustainable for another 100 years.

As always, I suspect, ultimately the beginnings of an answer lie somewhere within the communities we serve. Our budgets, our donations and our volunteers all come from these communities, and we are, after all, one and the same. Some of the most successful fire departments I have visited play a key role in their community and, perhaps more importantly, their community plays a key role in their department.

There is little doubt the fire service needs assistance from its provinces and the municipalities it serves to ultimately find a sustainable solution. However, in the meantime we have to be accountable and take matters into our own hands and that starts within our community and is built on a foundation of awareness.

The sustainability of the volunteer fire service will no longer be a question when 9.5 out of 10 doors not only know we exist but care that we do.

Please forward comments to chad@thefirewithin.ca

Parents/caregivers role with children and smoke alarms

BY MAHENDRA WIJAYASINGHE, Manager, Research & Analysis, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

A number of video news features and, more recently, Internet postings have depicted sleeping children's responses to smoke alarms. The first news feature appeared in 2001 on WCCO-TV in Minneapolis produced with the help of the Bloomington, Minnesota Fire Department. Since WCCO conducted its news story, similar news stories have aired across the United States. While these news stories lack the controls and specifications required for research, they have made one point clear - **Children can sleep through smoke alarms.**

Children are deep sleepers

According to published reports, researchers have long known that children sleep differently from adults and that their sleep is especially sound in the hours soon after they first fall asleep. The younger the child, the longer the deep-sleep phase is likely to last. Since children aged 5 and under and adults 65 and older (for whom smoke-alarm waking effectiveness might also be an issue) are twice as likely as the general population to die in a home fire, the research has commanded the attention of everyone interested in fire safety in the home.

Dr. Dorothy Bruck, a psychologist at the School of Psychology, Victoria University in Australia, did the original research into this issue. For children 15 and under, the reliable waking rate to a 60-decibel alarm sounding at pillow level was only 5.6%. In contrast, Bruck found all of the parents woke when the alarms sounded. In another study where the sound level was increased to 89-decibels, she concluded that louder, closer alarms were unlikely to solve the problem. No comparable research has been published by Bruck's peers to verify her findings.

Smoke alarms are a benefit

In light of the above research and other studies, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) pointed out the overwhelming data demonstrating smoke alarms' proven benefit. Since the early 1970s, when smoke alarms made their way into homes, residential fire deaths have been cut in half.

The younger the child, the longer the deep-sleep phase is likely to last.

A working group organized by ULC and UL brought together a multidisciplinary panel of experts, comprised of pediatric sleep experts, safety engineers, consumer interest groups and manufacturers, including sleep researchers, to better understand the physiological and technical aspects of the issue. (**ULC convenes Subcommittee to study why some children may not awaken to smoke alarms** *Public education to play key role in addressing issue in Canada: 4/29/03*; www.ulc.ca/About_ulc/news_detail.asp?News_ID=38). Their report in 2003 made the following observations:

- based on the working group deliberations, this is a complicated issue that might not have a single, easy answer;
- children's sleep patterns may prevent them from being able to hear and react appropriately to alarms. If, and until, a technological solution can be found, awareness of the issue will be a pressing concern for the fire safety community.

There were no radical technological changes recommended to address this issue, however, the need for more research on this issue was recognized. The subcommittee also emphasized that smoke alarms - when maintained properly - continue to save lives every day, and that consumers should consider them a reliable "front-line defense" against fire.

Conclusions

- Families should not forgo smoke alarms; NFPA statistics show that home smoke alarms are nearly as effective at saving the lives of children age 6 to 10 as they are in saving the lives of everyone else, although it may often be that the parents, not the alarms, are waking their children.
- What is imperative at the moment is for the public to understand the need to not rely solely on smoke alarms as the entire answer to escaping from fire. These recent news events serve to reinforce the need for home escape planning. Smoke alarms are a tool in the planning process. Parents need to clearly understand their supporting roles in the escape plan.
- Adult caregivers have a vital role and responsibility in waking up children and teenagers to the sound of smoke alarms. As children can be 'deep sleepers', caregivers should never assume that activated smoke alarms will awaken and alert their sleeping children. As part of their home fire escape plan, caregivers must make it their responsibility to awaken and evacuate children in a fire.
- If caregivers plan to leave their children in the care of a babysitter, they should review the home fire escape plan with the babysitter. They should also test the smoke alarms in the presence of the

babysitter. This will ensure that everyone knows what to do in case of fire and will be able to escape safely.

- In addition, caregivers should consider the fact that smoke alarms may not awaken teenagers, older adults, people who take medication or those with sleep disorders (e.g. sleep apnea).
- Every household must assess the needs of its members and determine if anyone has special needs. These special needs must be taken into consideration when developing and practicing the home fire escape plans.
- Currently, the solution for individuals with special needs consists of using different types of smoke alarms and planning a fire escape that relies on the assistance of family members.
- Vocal smoke alarms, a recent technological innovation, may be a solution but again there are not enough trials to prove their reliability. Furthermore, smoke alarms with voice recording capability may not be effective either, as children may sleep through a parent's instructions to wake up and evacuate. Also, the duration of the recording allowed may be too short and one message cannot be applicable to all possible fire scenarios. There is also a need to repeat a warning message which is not possible with these devices.

Smoke alarms may not be reliable in certain situations

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), although children under 16 have longer periods of deep sleep than adults and do not reliably wake in response to smoke alarms, "there is no evidence that children have a higher fire death rate because of the inability to wake to a smoke alarm." They noted that the smoke alarms that are currently available are effective at waking adults who are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs or who are not sleep deprived. However, the devices may not be reliable for older adults with hearing loss. The home layout and smoke alarm locations can influence whether the warning will be heard; earlier warning is provided by interconnected smoke alarms (2007 NFPA report – *U.S. Experience with Smoke Alarms and Other Fire Detection/Alarm Equipment*. Marty Ahrens; Fire Analysis and Research Division, National Fire Protection Association, 2007).

Digest

Agency staff updates

The newest updates to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency are:

- Summer student **Andrea Kennedy** is assisting with the administration of the Alberta Emergency Notification System and the Alberta Emergency Public Warning System. She has just completed her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Alberta and will be applying for her Masters Degree in Translation in the fall.
- **Kallie Price**, Administrative Assistant to Colin Blair. Kallie started with the agency on June 9, 2008. She has been with the Alberta Government for 23 years and brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience. Her most recent assignment was with Alberta Infrastructure; previous various administrative positions were in Environment, Agriculture and Children's Services.
- On June 2, **Val Carmody** returned to the Agency in a new administrative support role to the Strategic Corporate Services Branch. Val has spent the last several years with the Aagency/Fire Commissioner's Office as well as the Assistant Deputy Minister's Office of the Public Safety Division. In February of this year she left Municipal Affairs to take on a short-term placement with Education.
- **Greg Carter,** Director, Risk Plans and Consequence Management and Government Emergency Operations Centre, has moved to Alberta Environment as Regional Director with ASERT.
- **Sharon Brisbin**, Manager, Strategic Issues and Priorities, has moved back to Ottawa.

The Stakeholders Summit (formerly known as "Connecting the Dots") will be held in Nisku on October 29 - 30, 2008.

Details will be announced soon.

In memoriam

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of the following fire personnel:

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Mr. Harold Criss – an icon from the former Alberta Fire Training School (now *fire etc.*) – passed away on July 1st, just four days short of his 70th birthday, from cancer in Vermilion, Alberta. Funeral services were held in Edmonton. In lieu of flowers, a donation to the Cross Cancer Society is greatly appreciated.

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Ron Silvester, retired Captain with Edmonton Fire and Rescue, passed away on Monday July 7, 2008. Ron's career with Edmonton's fire department spanned from June 1, 1970 to July 4, 2002. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Firefighters Burn Treatment Society.

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10 digit phone numbers

With Alberta's switch to a 10 digit number coming into effect September 2008, don't forget to switch any pre-recorded numbers, such as fax machine distribution lists or contact numbers in cell phones and Blackberry devices.

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to review the facts surrounding high-intensity residential fires and make recommendations to reduce their occurrence and severity.

Staff in AEMA and the Public Safety Division of AMA are working hard to implement the recommendations by January 2009. The recommendations fall into five main areas:

- improving public education and awareness
- changing and improving construction site fire safety and security
- tightening up construction codes and standards
- more centralized monitoring of fire investigation and reporting
- linking land-use planning and construction regulations.

To read all the recommendations or the entire report, go to www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca

Images depict the devastation caused by residential fires.

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Alberta Emergency Management Agency
Suite 2810, 10303 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3N6

Phone: 780-422-9000
Fax: 780-644-1044
Email: firecomm@gov.ab.ca

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Jack Born, Design Quarry
Design and Pre-Press Production

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